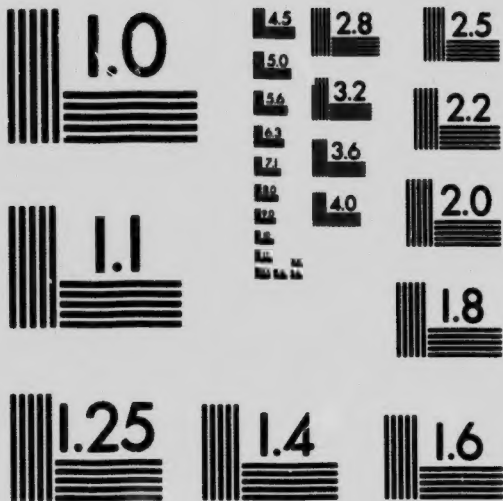




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**The Prisons of Tokyo
and
A Social Service
Opportunity**

By

**A. CAROLINE MACDONALD,
B.A. (TOP.)**



For private circulation only.



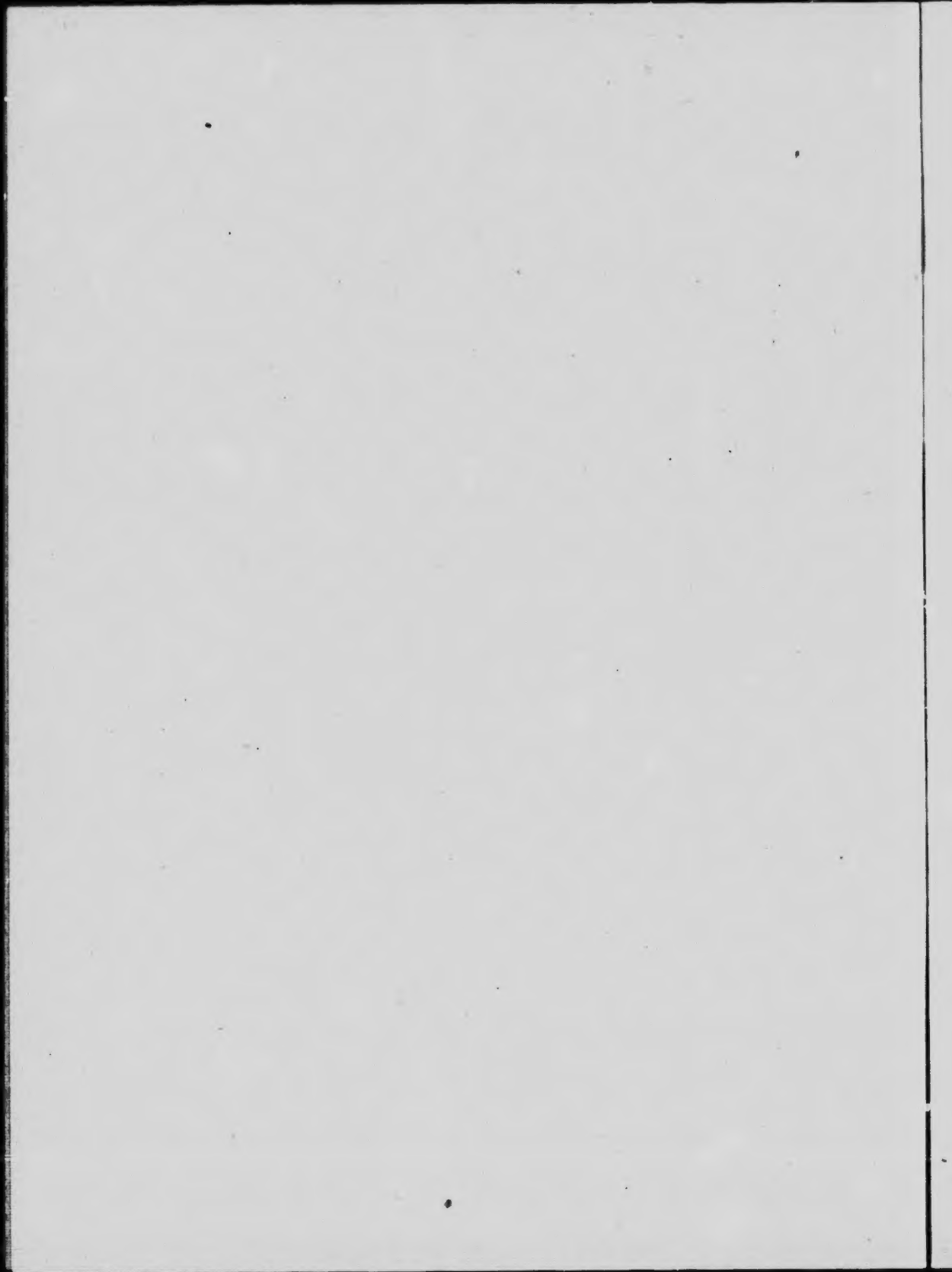
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In the Prisons of Tokyo

IT was just six years ago on the night of the sixteenth of October that a terrible tragedy occurred in Tokyo which was destined to change the course of my whole life work. Under circumstances which need not be gone into here, a quiet decent young man, a clerk in the National Red Cross much trusted by the higher officials, murdered his wife and two little children. He appears to have come to himself shortly after doing the deed, and before the affair was discovered, gave himself up to the police. I had known both the man and his wife for about two years, and the little ones as well, and the blow to me was terrible.

I visited the man in prison at intervals during the year that the trial was

going on. Through terrific spiritual struggles and agony the man emerged, quiet and steady to face the future whatever it might bring. So marvellous was the change that came over him that a prison official borrowed his Bible from him, read it as he patrolled the prison corridor at night, became a Christian and was baptized. As the official said to me, "We are used to crime here; it does not touch us much, but we never saw *repentance* before."

The man was finally given a life sentence, which was commuted, to twenty years at the time of the Emperor's coronation. He was sent to another prison, and my connection with the prison where I had seen him while his trial was going on naturally ended. I did not wish it otherwise. I did not dream that the year's special experience would react otherwise than in the deepened vision it had given me of God's power to save to the uttermost. Shortly

afterwards, however, when I went to thank the head official of the prison for his courtesy and sympathy during the year of my visits, he made a curious request of me. ' There are in the prison at the present moment," he said, "over thirty men who are awaiting the execution of the death sentence. I shall give you their names and I want you to help them."

And so began what one might call my prison work. Each year since then I have been given the names of the men condemned to death in this prison and letters have come from hundreds of others awaiting trial, begging me to send them Christian books and to visit them. The time came when it was necessary for me to decide whether I could keep on with this work, for, if that was to be, it would necessitate my giving up the Y.W.C.A. work of which I had been National Secretary for ten years. I resigned from the Association, came

back to Canada for six months, and returned to Japan to a teaching post which had been offered in a Women's College in Tokyo and which I accepted for financial reasons. Through the help of a few friends in the United States and Canada, however, it was not necessary to do more than half-time teaching, and I was able to give my spare time to this new work.

On my return I was welcomed cordially by the prison officials. Many of the men condemned to death had gone during my absence, and the officials were eager to tell me how quiet and steady they had been at the end. Some of them had had their sentences commuted and had been transferred to another prison, but other men asked to see me and the work continued.

I found myself almost immediately in touch with two prisons, for I was welcomed also to the prison where these men had been sent and where the man

through whom I had first touched this side of life was incarcerated. I know now over one hundred men in this convict prison alone where only men whose sentences are more than twelve years are sent, and I visit the prison once a week and see eight or nine men in succession. I see each man individually for I always keep in mind that some day every man is going to come out, and it behooves one to get to know his disposition, his background, and his tendencies so far as possible. It is a day's work to see eight or nine prisoners in succession, each with his own problems and his own soul's agonies. It takes something out of one to try to help them to endure, for endure they must, and to endure with hope. And it takes three hours of the day merely to go to this prison and return—an hour and a half of the time on foot. The Governor of this prison is a Christian, and many officials

as well as prisoners are reading the Bible and are greatly changed. The Governor has told me that much of the good influence in the prison has been due to the quiet steady life of the man on whose account I first touched prison life.

Last autumn, and not through any aggression on my own part, the prison for first offenders was opened to me. I am free also to go to the women's prison, which is an hour and a half run by train from Tokyo. I have visited Yokohama prison and another prison away off in the country.

MEN in prisons have families oftentimes. I learn that a child of eight is to be sold as a geisha (a licensed dancing girl) in order to pay the lawyer's fees, and off I go to the lawyer who, upon hearing the circumstances, consents to do the work for nothing. The ten year old boy of a man in prison is taken out of school and apprenticed, and steps must be taken to get him back into school or he will follow in the footsteps of his father in the end. The mother of a man just beginning a five years' sentence tells me that her son has tuberculosis, and that the prison officials have said they will release him on sick leave if Miss MacDonald will be responsible for putting him into a hospital. The wife of a man in jail forsakes her children and goes off with another man, and thereby starts a

new train of problems. A little daughter of a prisoner dies and she has to be decently buried. And so the ramifications widen. I touch here only the fringe of the actual details.

I did think my school work and prison work were mutually exclusive, but one day I met one of my own students, a girl of nineteen, inside the prison gate. "What are you doing here"? I exclaimed. She threw herself sobbing into my arms and said, "My father!" Just before I returned to Canada I visited the women's prison, and saw two graduates of Christian schools, both in for attempted murder, one of a mother-in-law and the other of a lover. I have met a number of men in prison who have been in good schools and colleges.

Within recent months I have been asked a number of times by a Judge, who has charge of juvenile cases, to help care for children let out on parole. I have

been telephoned to from prisons to go to get people out when they are released, one among the number, I am sorry to say, an American woman who was in for unlicensed prostitution. More than once I have been telephoned to by police stations to come and see some unfortunate friend who has got into trouble over again.

New problems arise when men come out of prison. Even when they have homes of their own and are able to find work for themselves which is not always the case, much has to be done for them.

They must be advised and encouraged and restrained as the need may be, and merely listened to at times when the struggle of life is almost too keen to be borne. I have in mind men who have struggled and won and are living earnest Christian lives to-day, and I have known others for whom the battle has grown too keen. Two or three days before I left Japan, a poor fellow who

had been in my house for some time after he came out of prison, committed suicide. He had really struggled for a while, but he lacked in moral stamina and I had begun to fear for him when the blow of his death fell upon me. It is not an easy thing to set a man on his feet again after he has fallen, but the task is there to be done.

I touch practically every man in Tokyo prison who is condemned to death. Many of them have faced death with steady courage and triumphant hope. Somewhat more than a year ago, an official letter came to me from the prison chaplain, a Buddhist priest, telling me of the execution of a man whom I had seen frequently. It is curious to note that the chaplain, Buddhist priest though he was, uses a Christian vocabulary when he speaks of the man's spiritual state. His letter, translated as literally as possible, is as follows:

"This morning, the seventeenth of August, 1918, at nine o'clock, Tokichi Ishii was executed at Tokyo Prison. He faced death rejoicing greatly in the grace of God, and with steadiness and quietness of heart. His last message was that you be told of to-day's event and so I am writing in his stead to let you know of his going and to thank you for your many kindnesses to him. He has left his books and manuscripts to you and you will receive them at the prison office. His last words, which are in the form of a poem, he asked me to send to you. They are as follows:

My name is defiled,
My body dies in prison,
But my soul purified
Goes to-day to the City of God."

A Social Service Opportunity

I HAVE touched only a few of the representative things I do, but they indicate the opportunities for large development. I have no machinery except my own private house, a rented one, which has been in reality a Community Centre for some time, the street cars to cover distances so far as they go, and my two feet to make up the deficit. I have no money but the equivalent of an ordinary salary, and as for time, there are only twenty-four hours a day even in Japan. This account has been disgracefully overdrawn, at times almost to bankruptcy.

Plans must be made for the future if the opportunities I have indicated are to be conserved for the regeneration of Japan. It can best be done by trans-

ferring myself to the section of the city where social problems are most acute, and there with my present opportunities as a nucleus, develop a large Community work. This centre, all are agreed, is the district called Asakusa, the most densely populated part of the city, with a population of 266,149 and an area of about two square miles. It is also the district with whose problems I am most familiar. Within this congested district is Asakusa Park, seventy-five acres in extent, set apart for a sort of Coney Island with 28 huge moving picture shows and theatres, and a popular and disease-breeding Buddhist temple. Fifty thousand people pass through this park every night on various pleasures bent. Behind, and within twenty minutes' walk is the widely known and infamous Yoshiwara, a licensed prostitute district containing 30 acres of land, 228 houses, and 2,362 licensed women. These two places represent the domin-

ant influence of the district, and crime and juvenile delinquency abound. The ordinary people of the district are for the most part unskilled labourers, the class from which spring the most menacing social problems.

Shortly before leaving Japan for Canada I consulted a number of leading Japanese men whom I knew personally, as to how we could best conserve the opportunities for social betterment which have fallen into my hands, and one of them, the leading criminal lawyer in the country, and a prominent member of parliament, said to me:

"The psychological moment has come to do a conspicuous piece of social service work in Tokyo. Many Japanese are talking about the need of coping with our social problems in some practical way, but they have had no experience and do not know how to begin. You can render a great service by

pioneering this new type of work and by training Japanese to part in it. Asakusa is the best place to begin, for it is the centre not only of Tokyo's problems but of all Japan's.

"I am one of a committee appointed by the Department of Justice to draw up plans for Juvenile Courts, and we shall probably get them started within a year or two. But even if we get them going we shall not be able to do much for the children unless we have by that time some such work begun as you suggest."

Two weeks before I left Japan a number of representative Japanese men, who have been familiar with my work, met at my house and discussed the plans just indicated. In token of their belief in the necessity for such a work and in my ability to pioneer it, the action

indicated in the following letter was taken:

With reference to the plans for Settlement work in Asakusa, Tokyo, about which you have consulted us, I wish to say that the following gentlemen have gladly consented to stand as a Committee behind the enterprise, and will undertake during your absence from Japan to search for land in a suitable place, and to raise one hundred and fifty thousand yen towards establishing the enterprise.

On behalf of the Committee,

Yours truly,

(Signed) MASAHISA UEMURA,
Convenor.

The names of the Committee are as follows:

REV. M. UEMURA, the leading Minister of the Presbyterian Church and the Head of a Theological College.

DR. S. SAWA, a member of Parliament and the leading criminal lawyer in Japan.

MR. E. FUNAO, the business manager of a large Charity Hospital which is endowed by the wealthy Mitsui family.

GENERAL HIBIKI, a general in the Army.

MR. K. ITO, a steel merchant.

MR. S. ARIMA, Governor of the Federal Penitentiary in Tokyo.

MR. T. FUGENJI, a lawyer who does law work for the missions.

MR. D. TAGAWA, editor-in-chief of a large daily paper, who has been a member of Parliament, vice-mayor of Tokyo, and an under secretary in the Department of Justice.

All these gentlemen are active Christians.

A. CAROLINE MACDONALD.

The Canadian Committee

THE foregoing is Miss Macdonald's own story of the inception, development and future outlook for her unique work in Tokyo. The work has grown to such an extent that Miss Macdonald feels not only that she would be no longer justified in teaching part time to support herself but that she must have additional workers and facilities in order to take advantage of the many opportunities open to her. As is indicated above, her work is looked upon with benevolence by even the official non-Christian Japanese and will undoubtedly receive financial as it does receive moral support from that class.

In the course of an article in a Japanese prison newspaper, the Chief of the Prison Bureau of the Department of

Justice of Japan says: "Miss Macdonald is devoted with all her being to her task and the results are truly impressive; one must come in touch with her to appreciate the force of her spirit—No matter how long the road or how hard the task, her zeal and good-will carry her through every obstacle—I have had my eyes opened by her living example and have learned how lofty is her teaching and how far-reaching its good effects."

On account of the intimate connection with the official Japanese, this work could hardly be handed over to a Mission Board of any Church, while, at the same time, Miss Macdonald would never curtail the essentially Christian nature of her efforts in order to obtain thereby financial support from non-Christian sources.

As a result of Miss Macdonald's visit to Canada and the United States a Committee has organized itself in New

York, under the chairmanship of Dr. E. Stagg Whitin, of the National Committee of Prisons and Prison Labour, to co-operate with the committee in Tokyo to raise the capital fund of \$300,000 necessary for land, buildings and equipment.

The raising of an annual budget of about \$8,000 has been suggested as the part of Miss Macdonald's friends in Canada. Of this amount an annual grant of \$2,500 has been made by the Women's Missionary Society of the Canadian Presbyterian Church and many individual donations have been received, in addition to provision for Miss Macdonald's personal expenses and salary.

Before returning to Japan in May (1920), Miss Macdonald arranged to have a committee take charge of the raising of this annual budget and the undersigned committee now appeals for support for this very worthy object.

Honorary Chairman: J. K. Macdonald, Esq.,
President,
Confederation Life Association.

Chairman: Professor E. F. Burton, Ph. D.,
University of Toronto.

Secretary : Miss Margaret Wrong, M.A.,
University of Toronto.

Treasurer: Miss A. W. Patterson, B.A.,
Secretary to the President,
University of Toronto.

Additional Members:

Lady Falconer.

Professor Clara Benson, Ph.D.

Mrs. J. A Macdonald.

Mrs. E. F. Burton.

Miss Emma Kaufman, Kitchener, Ont.

Miss Jean Macdonald.

Chancellor Bowles, Victoria College.

T. A. Russell, Esq., B.A.,
Russell Motor Co.

C. L. Burton, Esq.,
Robert Simpson Co.

Kindly fill out the attached subscription
blank and forward same to the Treasurer.

Miss A. W. Patterson, B.A.,
President's Office, University of Toronto.

I hereby subscribe the sum ofdollars
annually for the nextyears to
Miss Macdonald's Tokyo Settlement.

Name.....

Address.....

Date.....

Kindly fill in the number of years for which
you are willing to subscribe. Five years is the
time suggested by the committee.

